



COMMUNIST PARTY OF BRITAIN SUBMISSION
TUC ANTI RACIST TASK FORCE



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The establishment of the Task Force by the TUC is a potentially significant decision which can enable British Trade Unions and its bodies to play a major part in a society which clearly continues to harbour racists and operate in a racist way. The Communist Party of Britain has encouraged affiliates to play their part in developing the work of those producing the final report.

The Communist Party of Britain (CPB) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Task Force.

Key Principles

- Antiracist and anti fascist work must be based on class and understand the imperialist

nature of the British State both in the past and now

- Unions must train their representatives in all aspects of racism including a knowledge of legislation that is used against migrants
- Unions must engage with employers to develop anti racist policies
- Unions must recognise the concerns of their Black members.
- Unions must assist in the organisation of unorganised workers many of whom are black
- Unions must challenge the hostile environment policy
- Unions must oppose precarious employment

A Class Based Approach

The Communist Party since its formation has always aimed to have a class based approach to dealing with the issue of racism in society. We

take the view that that without recognising how and racism emerges any approach to anti racist work results in divisions in our class. We also recognise that there is a need for broad unity in the antiracist struggle as such we have always supported both the need for labour organisations such as trade unions and the need to act in a way that is not sectarian.

TUC Initiatives

There have been in our view three significant Trade Union Initiatives in the last 12 months. The Statements made by those Unions in the Trade Union Research Group; the Report into far right activity commissioned by the TUC and the decision by the TUC Executive Committee to establish the antiracist task force in the light of the Black Lives Matter demonstrations.

The Report by William McPherson in 1999 into the death of Stephen Lawrence, showed that there was

institutional racism in the Metropolitan Police. In 2001 as part of the findings of its Stephen Lawrence Task Group the TUC inserted new equality clauses in the TUC constitution. Model clauses were issued to Unions and a regular Trade Union audit was proposed. The TUC argued that there should be race equality strategies. Some Unions have taken steps to implement the TUC recommendations. Others haven't but in any case, we must go further than the TUC recommended at the time.

Britain's Road to Socialism

The Communist Party's Programme is contained in Britain's Road to Socialism(BRS).

The BRS states:

'Capitalist exploitation has always depended on maintaining a labour market in which workers compete

for work, on preventing collective organisation by dividing working people against each other through prejudice and discrimination based for example on sex and gender, nationality, race and ethnicity, age, religion and occupational grade'

'Moreover, capitalism has always utilised differences of sex, ethnicity, education, skill, employment status and mental and physical disability to divide the labour force and drive down wage levels.'

'Black and ethnic minority labour is used to fill many of the jobs with low pay and minimal training and promotion opportunities. In particular trans national companies employ young and migrant workers as casual or short-term labour on inferior terms and conditions often to undermine collective agreements reached with trade unions.'

' Exploitation is also reinforced by sexist, racist and anti-foreigner

attitudes. In an imperialist country, with a history of empire, such as Britain, racist ideas are deeply rooted, born of the need to dehumanise colonial peoples in order to win public support for their oppression and super exploitation. Today, surviving prejudices can be manipulated by the ruling class as well as right wing nationalist and fascist movements.'

'The erosion of the welfare state, as part of the turn to neo-liberalism, has entrenched inequalities and divisions between people over recent decades, accompanied by an ideological backlash against women and minority ethnic communities. At the same time, the struggle to eliminate inequity has the potential not only for promoting unity within the working class, but also drawing those people from the middle strata (small traders etc.).....'

The Central Role of the Organised Labour Movement

The Communist Party strongly argues that the organised labour movement has the means at its disposal to challenge racism in all its forms and must develop clear strategies and policies to do so. Unions must therefore do more than just challenge racists, something on which there needs to be more work, but also challenge racism and to do that it must challenge Britain's promotion of reactionary policies internationally. Unions must also explain why racism is used by the ruling class as a means of dividing the workforce.

Over the recent years political education within Unions has been reduced due in part to attacks on facility time and paid support. Some Unions have organised events such as Unite Unity over Division. It is unclear if these events have penetrated the workforce in a real way but in any case the events have

not recognised the root of British Racism which is its imperialist past. The danger with not dealing with this question is that some discrimination is seen as acceptable as long it is doesn't apply to your work colleagues.

Too many Unions see their antiracist and antifascist work through them being affiliates of or funders of antiracist and antifascist organisations. The Communist Party argues strongly that Unions must see antiracist and antifascist a key part of its work in the workplace and the wider community where members live. This does not mean that support should not be given to Local and National AntiRacist Groups as these have an important role in bringing in unorganised workers and communities but support for such bodies cannot be a substitute of Union led, Socialist inspired antiracist work in the work place.

Unions must seek to support their Black members. Communists support Black Sections and recognise that many people in the BAME Communities have legitimate criticisms about their Union leaderships and fellow colleagues. Such criticism isn't surprising again given the deep rooted nature of racism in British Society. Being elected as a representative does not turn that person into an antiracist overnight.

It is therefore vital that Unions take the issue of representative education seriously. Such education cannot of course be proscribed but must include class, imperialism and race. It must stress the need for bottom up organising.

Many Black workers will be in unorganised workplaces, often on agency contracts. If Unions do not organise in such places workers are subject to super exploitation. This is not a simple issue we realise but as a

step Unions should look to develop more campaigns such as Sheffield needs a pay rise and look to train people as community organisers. There are plenty of good examples such as the Amazon and Wetherspoon Campaigns and the work on precarious employment. But many workers are employed in agencies and have no idea if they will be paid from day to the next. Precarious and unorganised workforces are of course used against organised workers. Who are seeking to protect their terms and conditions, often due to financial necessity.

Unions must work together and reach agreements with employers jointly challenging racism. Unite's Unity over division may be a model, but we are aware that Unions have negotiated with many employers, but they are often not policed. Likewise the EHRC has come in for some criticism with many antiracists and politicians arguing that given the

situation that locally based Community Relations Councils and a Race Equality Commission must be recreated. It is the case that without a means to enforce discrimination policies by themselves are not enough.

Inequality and Oppression

In her Statement on 19 May 2021 General Secretary Frances O'Grady rightly highlighted the findings of the ONS report that showed that Black Unemployment had hit 8.9% She highlighted structural inequality . In commenting on the same report Zita Holbourn from BARAC highlighted the precariousness of many jobs BAME citizens are forced to work in. As highlighted this is class exploitation with Black workers being oppressed in order to support the profit motive. To Challenge Unions will need as stated need to understand the roots of racism and its operation within the labour market.

There has been a lot of comment of certain sections of society being subject to a bigger impact from Covid 19. These inequalities it has been shown existed before the Health Emergency. Many Black workers working in precarious sectors have no alternative but to continue to work. The Bohoo Group's actions in Leicester is an example of this. This is not withstanding the fact that it had a Modern Slavery Statement (2019) updated in February 2021. This statement focused on supply chains and the health and safety of its employees.

In many ways they were forced to do this following an undercover investigation. In July 2020 another undercover investigation showed that the workers were at risk of coronavirus. This is just one example of profit being put before workers' safety. The TUC must carry out regular audits and support workers - organised or not in their wish for a safe workplace.

If the Trade Union Movement is going to take on its responsibilities and enact some of the demands that emerge from the Black Lives Movement - the initial driver for the Task Force it must be aware of the communities black people reside in and what their demands are. Yes there is discrimination in the workplace and in recruitment practices and the TUC must oppose these and that means employer, human resource practices must be challenged and changed to be antiracist. Too often Unions have accepted the modern speak of Diversity rather than Equality. Appraisal and disciplinary procedures show that more Black Employees receive poorer pay, worse promotion opportunities and are more often disciplined. White employees will be given the benefit of the doubt. Something that also coincidentally happens in the Justice System too.

But there is also discrimination and exploitation on a wider scale - housing, banking and access to basic amenities. The Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill will adversely impact upon Black Citizens as they are more likely to be arrested and charged.

UK's Immigration System

The immigration laws are more likely to adversely impact upon migrant communities the majority of whom are black. In order to be relevant to many black citizens Unions must take the inherent discrimination in the UK's Immigration System Seriously.

Many Refugees have lived in this country for decades and do not have citizenship. Some have permanent leave to remain which should allow access unimpeded to work, homes and public funds. Unfortunately this status can be withdrawn and in any case due to the hostile environment many employers, and land lords do

not understand what this status actually means. Many others have either temporary leave to remain or no status at all. Again meaning that they are ripe for super exploitation. The TUC needs to look to support legitimate demands from migrant communities such as right to work and access to public funds.

The TUC cannot be neutral on the Government's hostile environment policies. These go far beyond the Windrush Scandal. From the end of June 2021 the EU regularisation ends. Government has refused to extend the application process and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants estimates that many 1000s will have failed to apply in time. People who have a right to remain will suddenly be caught in the Hostile Environment net and find themselves subject to deportation orders. Indeed the HO has written to people reminding them to apply even when they do not need to.

The Communist Party has adopted a policy position which argues for a non racist immigration policy. The Party can expand on this point if required.

This disconnect is already causing a negative reaction in some areas where young black citizens, the Trade Union Movement's future activists and members understandably ask 'Why should Unions be leading this action?'

Remember our History

Finally the Communist Party have always welcomed a celebration and commemoration of the Labour Movement's history. We should not hide away from past problems - Grunwick and the Bristol Bus Boycott may be two examples. But as with other events - Durham, Chainmakes, Burston, Tolpuddle we would like to propose that the Trade Union Movement commits itself to organising an annual event when we

beat back the fascists and racists. Lessons can still be learnt about the anti fascist struggles of the 1930s such as Cable Street. Many Black Trade Unionists and activists have played remarkable roles such as Claudia Jones. We should celebrate these stories bringing them alive for school and university students. The alternative is that they will be forgotten and the Ruling Class will put over its view of history.

We invite colleagues to consider this submission and will welcome the opportunity to expand on any of the points raised therein.

Yours

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